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## Beloit School District

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Beloit is the south-central gateway to Wisconsin, located on the Wisconsin-Illinois border, about 15 miles south of Janesville. This industrial city of about 35,000 is home to Beloit Industries and the Hormel meat packing company; General Motors in Janesville is nearby, as is Chrysler in Belvidere, Illinois. The city is also the home of Beloit College, one of Wisconsin's more prominent private colleges and a strong partner with Beloit schools.

Beloit is a diverse community in terms of both race/ethnicity and socio-economic status. In a school-age population of about 7,000, 28 percent of students are African American, 7.5 percent are Hispanic, and 63 percent are Caucasian. About 37 percent of the total student population registered recipients of free or reduced-price lunches.

As reflected in the motto of its 1996-2001 strategic plan, "Committed to Excellence, Strengthened by Diversity," the School District of Beloit sees its diverse student population as an asset. Two of its five major goals deal directly with valuing diversity.

**Goal #1:** Students will demonstrate high achievements in learning environments where their unique interests and strengths are valued.

**Goal #2:** Students' educational needs will be addressed through the collective utilization of community and school resources.

**Goal #3:** Student learning will be enhanced by the cooperative work and support of all community members.

**Goal #4:** Diversity will be valued in a culturally literate learning environment.

**Goal #5:** Students will demonstrate individual and social responsibility.

The district employs 515 licensed instructional staff working in 15 buildings: 12 elementary (K-5), two middle (6-8), and one high school. Thirty-five administrators oversee its direction and operations. The school system has a reputation for being progressive and innovative; the high school, for example, was a national prototype in its early adoption of four-block programming.

Like other districts, Beloit faces the challenges of student dropouts, alcohol and other drug use, teenage pregnancy, and other youth risk behaviors. According to AODA Coordinator Kay Nightingale, the city "faces problems head-on and tries to deal with them." Thus, the community actively participates in and supports the district's innovative and strong prevention programs.

One major collaborative effort was the district's April 1997 survey of all sixth through twelfth graders in cooperation with the Search Institute in Minneapolis. The survey was designed to assess external and internal developmental assets and document patterns of high-risk behavior among students. Survey results are being shared in a variety of ways in the community, including at Family and Community Town Suppers (FACTS) described in the section on Family and Community Connections. Kay Nightingale reports that the survey initiative and results have "focused and

provided direction” for community members and groups to do whatever they can within their sphere of influence to help students succeed in school and increase developmental assets in the home, school, and community. (Note: The survey is described in greater detail in the upcoming section on Implementation Strategies.)

## Implementation Strategies

### *Data and Dialogue with the Community*

Data and dialogue seem to be the key driving factors in the development of the district’s prevention programming. In 1990, the School District of Beloit and the Janesville School District collaborated to gather baseline data on parents’, students’, and school staff’s concerns regarding alcohol and other drug use. The 1990 survey as well as a follow-up 1992 survey were developed by Dr. D. Paul Moberg, director of the Center for Health Policy and Program Evaluation. Using these data, the AODA coordinator and curriculum supervisor chaired two separate committees (one at the elementary level and one at the secondary level) that formulated a K-12 prevention curriculum. These committees were composed of parents, school staff, local law enforcement, and district administrators. The curriculum evolved over the years as new prevention research surfaced and new strategies proliferated. The present curriculum is based on prevention research, addresses other youth risk behaviors, and builds on the *Tribes* process for fostering an environment of caring and respect. (See the sections on Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment for the current curriculum and Healthy School Environment for details on *Tribes*).

In 1995, the Beloit schools held a public forum on student-athlete drug testing and the athletic code that attracted a great deal of attention from parents, teachers, coaches, administrators, and school board members. The issue was whether or not to conduct student-athlete drug testing. After an extended dialogue, participants decided that it would be more beneficial to support prevention education rather than spend additional resources on an aggressive enforcement program of drug testing. According to district staff, this was a watershed moment for community support of prevention in the schools.

**Search Institute Survey:** The district’s two most recent attempts to gather data were the 1997 Youth Risk Behavior Survey in cooperation with

the DPI and the Search Institute Youth Survey – Attitudes and Behavior administered to all sixth-through twelfth-grade students in April 1997. These were massive undertakings that required considerable preparatory work and cooperation from many district staff. The Search Institute survey measured developmental assets that help young people become resilient, successful adults. These assets can be both external (provided to young people in their home, school, and community) and internal (personal qualities, attitudes, and beliefs). The survey also identified risky behaviors in which students participate. The district has since been involved in dialogue with the community about the survey results. According to the AODA coordinator, survey results seem to have a great deal of credibility among community members because they are specific to Beloit (“These are *our* children/grandchildren speaking to us”).

She and others have given dozens of presentations in the community, encouraging groups to use the survey results within their sphere of influence to build assets in Beloit youth. For example, funding involving community-based organizations is increasingly based on whether the proposed activity builds assets in young people. On a more personal level, the new high school football coach is starting a mentor program for team members. Each football player on the Beloit Memorial High School team (the “Purple Knights”) will have a volunteer adult male role model as a mentor. These adults from the community, called “Knights of the Roundtable,” will have preliminary meetings with the coaching staff as well as district and school administrators to learn about mentoring. Then each adult “knight” will establish a relationship with a player, meeting at least weekly and attending every football game.

In short, the survey has provided the data needed by all members of the community to build assets for youth. In the words of the AODA coordinator, “This survey has given Beloit a common focus. From senior citizens waiting at the bus stop with little children so they won’t have to wait alone to simply smiling at a child in the neighborhood, speaking her name, and asking how school is going this year, asset building is all our job. And if we want a healthy community and healthy kids, this survey has given us the data and information we need to activate. And it’s happening! The next time we survey kids in four years, we hope the assets will have jumped considerably!”

## District Leadership

Another factor that seems to have had a significant impact on the district's current direction is the commitment and enthusiasm of its AODA coordinator and members of the Pupil Services Team. For example, the growing involvement of staff across the district in the *Tribes* process can be attributed to this enthusiasm as well as the persistence of other influential Beloit staff who believed in its effectiveness. Through their promotion, more than 275 teachers, administrators, school board members, parents, and other community members have been trained in this approach. In addition, the AODA coordinator is instrumental in networking among district staff and community members; she helps district staff see the interconnections among the strategies in various components of the Framework.

The district administration has also played a major role in setting the climate for prevention initiatives and programming as well as creating school-community connections. The School District of Beloit, through its recently completed strategic plan ("Student Success for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century: 1996-2001"), made a commitment not only to the academic success of every student but also to their well-being as future contributing adults in their community. Each department develops its own objectives and action plan to help accomplish the broad goals outlined in the introductory section. Through this outcome-driven plan, the district is striving to create positive learning environments in which diversity is celebrated, connections with parents are strengthened, and coordinated efforts with community organizations and agencies occur.

## Funding Support

Federal Safe and Drug Free Schools and Communities Act (SDFSCA) entitlements as well as competitive grants administered by the Department of Public Instruction have substantially funded the district's prevention programs. Over the past 10 years, funding has included SDFSCA High Need, Alcohol and Traffic Safety, After School/Summer School, and State AODA Program grants. SDFSCA entitlements provide salary and support staff for the district's AODA coordinator; funding has also been used to purchase curricular materials and train staff.

For example, *Here's Looking at You, 2000* materials were purchased, and all K-5 elementary

teachers in the district participated in a two-day training in its use. It has been used to integrate health and wellness into other content areas, such as training a secondary social studies teacher to conduct *On Campus: Talking About Alcohol and Other Drugs* (OCTAA) in all required twelfth-grade social studies classes. Such funding has also supported parent programs, including *Talking with Your Kids About Alcohol and Other Drugs* (TWYKAA), the parent component of *Talking with Your Students About Alcohol* (TWYSAA), used in grades six and nine. In addition, grants have supported the initiation and continuation of such student programs as Natural Helpers and Team Beloit (described in detail in the Student Programs section). Finally, grant funds partially supported the administration and follow-up of the Search Institute assessment.

## CESA 2 Assistance

According to the AODA Coordinator, support and technical assistance from Cooperative Educational Service Agency (CESA 2) was also instrumental in providing guidance and support as the district developed its prevention and wellness programs. In particular, the CESA 2 AOD Network Facilitator helped conduct the Training of Trainers that prepares local district trainers for various prevention programs, such as *Tribes*, *Here's Looking at You, 2000*, TWYKAA, and so forth.

## Healthy School Environment

### *Tribes*

The School District of Beloit is using a process developed by Jeanne Gibbs (*Tribes: A New Way of Learning Together*, Center Source Systems, 1994) as a vehicle for fostering healthy classroom and school environments. The *Tribes* process helps create a positive school and classroom environment, which in turn positively affects behavior and learning. Beloit schools are working toward becoming *Tribes* "Learning Communities"—safe and caring environments that foster the growth and development of *all* students.

According to the *Tribes* program description, students achieve best when they

- feel included and appreciated by peers and teachers;
- are respected no matter their abilities, culture, gender, interests, dreams, and so forth;

- are actively involved in their own learning; and
- have positive expectations from others that they will succeed.

*Tribes* is not a curriculum but is a process that develops a sense of community, caring and support, opportunities for meaningful participation, and high positive expectations. In the *Tribes* process, students and teachers agree to listen attentively to each other, express appreciation for each other rather than to use “put-downs,” treat each other with respect, and honor the right to choose not to participate in group activities.

The *Tribes* process is now being used in all 12 elementary schools and in both middle schools; it will soon be offered, where requested, in the high school. Although acquiring the necessary resources to expand use of the *Tribes* process is a challenge, currently more than 275 Beloit teachers and administrators have been trained to use the process. Furthermore, people from the community (for example, school board members, parents, and clergy) are also part of *Tribes* training. The School District of Beloit Assessment and Research Office is currently doing an in-depth evaluation on the effects of the *Tribes* process in the district. Preliminary data suggest that *Tribes* has a positive impact on student achievement as well as on the classroom/school environment. Because of this positive impact, the district plans to prepare additional staff as trainers who will provide support and technical assistance to sustain existing *Tribes* “Learning Communities” and to create new ones across the district.

### *School Policy on Alcohol and Other Drugs*

In 1993-94, the high school principal initiated an informal survey in which Beloit Memorial students identified alcohol and other drugs as one of the top three reasons for school failure. School responses to this survey included a renewed commitment to prevention curriculum and a re-examination and “tightening up” of school policy. Thus, a student who violates this strict no-use policy must attend an after-school intervention program run by the AODA coordinator (described in more detail in the upcoming Student Programs section).

Believing that school staff must be positive role models, the district has also made mandatory drug testing a condition for employment and has developed procedures for supervisors to report suspected drug use among employees.

## **Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment**

The School District of Beloit is currently moving toward a comprehensive prevention curriculum that addresses the academic, physical, emotional, and social aspects of education. As described earlier, the district began this process by focusing on AODA prevention, a problem area identified by students, and subsequently integrated other health and prevention topics. The current prevention curriculum builds on and interacts with the positive environmental strategies and themes in the previously described *Tribes* process.

The AODA Prevention coordinator is a central figure in the district’s health and prevention curriculum. She is a certified trainer in all prevention programs used by the district, including *Tribes*, and is responsible for training other staff in these programs as well as prevention, resiliency, and youth development. She describes *Tribes* as the foundation of curricular efforts in all classes, with the curriculum itself providing age-appropriate information and skills that build on *Tribes* strategies for creating a positive environment. Students in the sixth, ninth, and twelfth grades participate in health units based on *Lifestyle Risk Reduction*, an approach developed by the Prevention Research Institute in Lexington, KY. The program is research-based and evaluates program outcomes. Its overall purpose is to reduce the risk that participants will have a problem now or in the future with alcohol or other drugs. Its goals are

- to increase abstinence;
- to delay the onset of first use; and
- to reduce high-risk use.

Educators who teach these units are trained in *Lifestyle Risk Reduction* as well as the *Tribes* process. Sixth graders participate in 12-15 lessons from *Talking with Your Students About Alcohol* (TWYSAA). Ninth graders participate in the required health education class, which is designed around *Talking with Your Students About Alcohol and Drugs* and incorporates other risk behaviors. Twelfth graders participate in another version of the *Lifestyle Risk Reduction* curriculum, *On Campus: Talking About Alcohol and Other Drugs*. These lessons are taught by a social studies teacher, trained by the AODA Prevention co-



ordinator, who “roams” to all required senior social studies courses. A brief outline of the K-12 AODA prevention curriculum follows:

**Grades K-5:** *Here's Looking At You, 2000*

**Grade 6:** *Talking with Your Students About Alcohol* (TWYSAA, Level 2): *Lifestyle Risk Reduction*

**Grade 7:** *Here's Looking At You, 2000* integrated into *Values and Choices*

**Grade 8:** *Drug Abuse Resistance Education* (DARE); prevention and healthy lifestyles information integrated into science, mathematics, and language arts classes

**Grade 9:** *Talking With Your Students About Alcohol and Drugs* (TWYSAA, Level 3): *Lifestyle Risk Reduction* in required health classes (other risk behaviors are addressed using this model)

**Grade 10:** *Talking With Your Students About Alcohol and Drugs* (TWYSAA, Level 3): *Lifestyle Risk Reduction* refresher as part of the driver's education curriculum, focusing on impairment problems from chemical use

**Grade 12:** *On Campus: Talking About Alcohol and Other Drugs* (OCTAA): *Lifestyle Risk Reduction* integrated into social studies and government classes

As the outline suggests, the School District of Beloit integrates other health and safety topics into its health curriculum and classroom activities. Broad topics include:

- hygiene and prevention of spreading germs
- violence prevention topics such as sexual harassment, protective behaviors, and weapons
- how to stay safe in dangerous situations
- tobacco and youth
- social skills development
- sexuality and contraceptives
- nutrition

## Pupil Services

Each Pupil Services Team consists of the school social worker, psychologist, school nurse, and guidance counselors. The district employs seven social workers, seven psychologists, eight nurses, and 13 guidance counselors. The team coordinates activities through a District Pupil Services Advisory Council, which represents a cross-section of staff concerned with student services and health/prevention issues. In addition to pupil services staff (social workers, psychologists, and counselors), council members include health teachers and the AODA coordinator. Site-level teams carry out programs at individual schools.

The School District of Beloit's 12 elementary schools are divided into four sections, referred to as the Quadrant System. In this strategy four different intradistrict systems are created, with pupil services personnel assigned to each specific quadrant and working only with the schools located in that quadrant. Relationships are developed over time between staff and students' families, which allow for continuity of service. Staff work as a team to solve problems and develop programs in a way that builds positive working relationships between students' homes and the schools.

## Student Programs

Student programs in the School District of Beloit vary from building to building, although some continuity exists across all schools. Student government, the Peer Mediators program, and Student Assistance Programs can be found at all schools. Similarly, the district provides alternative activities for students in all schools, some in cooperation and/or coordination with community organizations such as the Alliance for a Drug Free Rock County. Peer Educators and Peer Helpers programs are limited for the most part to Beloit Memorial High School; however, there is a Peer Helpers program at the elementary level that addresses youth violence and safety issues. A service learning component was in the planning stage during the 1997-98 school year.

Below are descriptors of some of the district's student programs. The program that seems to draw most significant recognition from students and staff is the Natural Helpers program at Beloit Memorial High School. It was initially funded by a competitive State AOD Program Grant and is

currently funded by Safe and Drug Free Schools and Communities Act entitlements.

### *Natural Helpers*

This peer-helping program identifies and trains a diverse group of students to assist classmates with problems they may be experiencing both inside and outside of the classroom. About 75 students are actively involved. The student selection process includes both teacher observation and student surveys.

Initially, a list of prospective students is developed through teachers' observations. Teachers look for behaviors that indicate leadership within all of the defined subgroups of students in natural settings around the school. Students who seem to have the trust and respect of their peers within their naturally developed communities ("cliques") are identified. Next, students themselves are surveyed, responding to the question, "Whom would you talk to if you had a problem?" Students identified through both staff observations and the student survey are then invited by student assistance advisors to participate in the Natural Helpers program. Staff at the high school view this program as an opportunity to bring students of diverse backgrounds into a cohesive helping network.

Natural Helper students participate in an intensive four-day training retreat facilitated by five Natural Helpers leaders. They learn and practice the fundamental skills of developing trust, listening, and helping. They also learn about school and community referral services available to students. Students in the Natural Helpers program are also involved in ongoing training that covers the variety of youth risk behaviors that occur in the Beloit Memorial High School student population. The training is held monthly, covering topics such as suicide, sexuality, gang violence, alcohol and other drug issues, teen pregnancy, stress, and physical abuse. Students receive current information and have an opportunity to discuss these issues. They also explore problem identification and resolution strategies designed to protect the health and safety of the students they help.

A major aspect of the Natural Helpers program is community service. Some of the health and wellness projects in which students participate include the following:

**Food Drive:** Students collected over 1,600 cans of food for Caritas, a local food pantry.

**CPR/Emergency Aid Training:** Some students received training in CPR and Emergency AID through the local Red Cross.

**Teens Against Tobacco Use:** Students participated in tobacco education resistance training in order to conduct sessions at elementary schools in the 1997-98 school year.

### *Team Beloit*

In the spring of 1997, the district was awarded a competitive two-year After School/Summer School grant from the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction to fund this program. Team Beloit brings together retired teachers, nonprofit community agencies, and selected high school juniors and seniors. They work as a team to strengthen the academic and behavioral skills of sixth-grade students identified as first participating in AOD use and/or beginning to exhibit patterns of academic and behavioral problems at school as well as with suspended students in grades 1-12. Sixth-grade students are served by Team Beloit through their ninth-grade year. The concept of resiliency and building on strengths is stressed in all parts of the program. Activities include tutoring, role modeling by high school students, field trips, goal-setting sessions with students and their families, parent/family nights, and community service.

### *Operation Snowball*

This prevention program at Beloit Memorial is affiliated with Rock County Operation Snowball, a countywide youth initiative that was recognized as an exemplary prevention program at the 1997 Wisconsin Prevention Conference. It is led by the ninth-grade health teacher. Students in the program, mostly ninth graders, participate in a three-day skill-building retreat to learn about making healthy decisions, living chemically free, and promoting healthy lifestyles. They also learn how to organize and develop activities and programs to promote this message to their high school peers and to elementary students. Operation Snowball students develop and implement programs throughout the school year at the high school while also speaking at the elementary schools to promote the various prevention themes they learned during their retreat.

## *The Alcohol and Drug Policy Violation Classes–Youth Diversion Program*

As a result of the 1993-94 student survey at Beloit Memorial High School that indicated students perceived use and abuse of alcohol and other drugs as one of the top three reasons for failure at school, the district revised its AOD policy. The change offers all students who are in violation of the policy the opportunity to attend an after-school alcohol and other drug intervention program. A student who elects not to participate or discontinues participating is subjected to stiffer sanctions, such as being charged with underage alcohol use and subsequently sentenced by the Municipal Court judge or going directly to an Administrative Hearing for possible school expulsion. The Alcohol and Drug Policy Violation Classes-Youth Diversion Program is the responsibility of the District AODA coordinator, who works with about 75 students each year.

While longitudinal data does not yet exist, some positive feedback has come from former students, who have sent letters recounting their experiences and the impact the program had on their lives. For example, one female student took the class, moved away, and later went on to college. She wrote back two years later to thank school officials for requiring her to attend the program. She also said that she recognized the significant impact of the class. In her words, “That class saved my life.”

### *Just Say No Clubs*

Just Say No Clubs, which are coordinated districtwide by an elementary principal, can be found at the Beloit elementary schools. Students meet after school to participate in healthy activities, such as field trips and hobbies, that are alternatives to high-risk behaviors and lifestyles. This is a collaborative school-community effort sponsored by the Beloit Optimist Club.

## **Adult Programs**

### *Parents*

A parent component is contained in the *Talking with Your Kids About Alcohol* (TWYKAA) curriculum in use by the School District of Beloit. Over 200 parents have been trained since the program began seven years ago. The TWYKAA pro-

gram informs parents about what their young people are learning in the *Talking with Students About Alcohol* curriculum as well as techniques and strategies to use with their teens when discussing alcohol and other drugs. Parent support programs for ATOD are also offered at the elementary level. Other parent programs are offered in individual schools by site level teams and Pupil Services staff on such topics as HIV/AIDS/STDs, teen pregnancy, and violence prevention.

### *Staff*

A staff wellness team in each school develops activities that promote health and wellness for school employees. Staff development activities are also provided by the school or through CESA 2 on topics relative to the youth risk behavior areas: ATOD, HIV/STD and pregnancy, violence and safety, nutrition, inactive lifestyle, and injuries and accidents. Staff employee assistance/wellness programs are operated on a site-level basis. Actual Employee Assistance Program (EAP) services are contracted, and the district employs a Staff Wellness coordinator.

## **Family and Community Connections**

One of the five broad goals in the School District of Beloit’s strategic plan reads, “Students’ education needs will be addressed through collective utilization of community and school resources.” The major strategies designed to reach this goal and to connect the schools and community are Village Partnerships and the Beloit Education Center, while other strategies are more directly related to prevention and wellness.

### *Village Partnerships*

Village Partnership is the name the School District of Beloit has given to the process of involving many groups (for example, parents, families, churches, businesses, service clubs, and government) in helping the district make decisions about the learning experiences offered to children in the community. Vehicles for this process include Village Partnership Site Councils at each school that make recommendations to a District Village Partnership Council. The councils use a consensus model for shared decision making and developed a plan for areas to be studied during the 1997-99 school years.

### *Beloit Education Center*

The Beloit Education Center is a cooperative effort involving the district and a number of community organizations to provide support for students who have been expelled from area schools. It includes but is not limited to the services of the following organizations: Beloit Inner City Council, Beloit Opportunities Industrialization Center (OIC), Family Service Association, YMCA, Beloit Police Department, Beloit Probation Department, and the School District of Beloit. It is not a School District of Beloit project but a community-based effort that is a true reflection of the Village Partnership concept.

The program, located at a community center, provides a continuing education-based experience during the period of a student's expulsion that includes tutoring in school subjects, counseling and support services, and an opportunity to interact with positive role models and to build on their personal assets. Student participation is voluntary, and students who do take part are expected to make a commitment to abide by the program contract, attend regularly, and take part in community service and counseling/support programs.

### *Family and Community Town Suppers (FACTS)*

After the Search Institute assessment described earlier was completed, the School District of Beloit held a series of dinner/dialogue events to begin a communitywide discussion around the survey results, community values, and character education. These Family and Community Town Suppers were important vehicles for disseminating survey results and combining them with the district's character education initiative (a part of the Department of Public Instruction's initiative on citizenship education). Community leaders, religious leaders, parents, members of the business community, youth workers, and school staff attended, with Spanish interpreters available for non-English-speaking Latino families.

### *Alliance for a Drug Free Rock County*

The Alliance for a Drug Free Rock County is a local chapter of the Alliance for a Drug Free Wisconsin. The organization is based in Janesville

but includes the Beloit area as well. The AODA coordinator, students, and community activists participate in activities that promote alternatives to high-risk behaviors for both young people and adults. One annual activity is the alcohol-free Family Fest.

### *Upward Bound*

Upward Bound is an organization for high school students who are at risk of not completing high school or going on to postsecondary education or job training. Students make a commitment to participate in this program which not only provides tutorial assistance but also offers guidance from a group of youth and adults who support the idea of achieving. Young people also work in a stable environment where they receive nurturing and constructive support for their efforts.

## **Future Directions**

Moving the district and community toward a strong wellness and prevention model is an evolving process that includes many people. The district's five-year strategic plan, "Student Success for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, 1996-2001," and community dissemination of the Search Institute assessment are significant steps in that process. Both will guide the School District of Beloit in its efforts to build a more comprehensive and collaborative educational system that incorporates health and wellness throughout the academic curriculum, infuses it into the school climate, and plays an important role in increasing the developmental assets of young people in Beloit. While action plans are still in the process of development, an important foundation has been laid in the form of community data and dialogue.

One of the next steps that the Beloit School District has identified is to develop a committee to more fully coordinate district prevention and wellness programs and to create an action plan based on the Search Institute assessment outcomes. The Comprehensive School Health Task Force is intended to consist of parents, business people, law enforcement, civic leaders, and public health officials, as well as school staff. The group will guide district planning and implementation of initiatives, including school policies and programs, that will add to the community's efforts to improve the developmental assets of Beloit children and youth.